



**PROVIDING REPRESENTATION  
IN HOUSING PRESERVATION,  
EVICTION DEFENSE, AND  
HOUSING CONDITIONS FOR LOW  
INCOME AND VULNERABLE  
POPULATIONS**

# PILOT PROJECT– MDJ EVICTION DEFENSE



## Existing Resources to Expand Eviction Defense

- Medical Legal Partnership with VHP at 17<sup>th</sup> and Chew –new attorney hired and bilingual paralegal with excellent experience
- Pool Institute for Health -Franklin Park Project collaboration for improved health in 2 Census Tracts
- Advocates experienced with LT representation, working through ERAP issues
- Lehigh County Eviction Defense funding in 2022 to expand eviction defense in the county



**North Penn**  
LEGAL SERVICES

**PHARE PROJECT– grant awarded June 2022 – July 1,2022**  
**Administered by United Way (UWGLV), in partnership with**  
**the LV Regional Housing Advisory Board (LVRHAB)**

- ▶ Use eviction data to determine which areas have a disproportionately high number of evictions.
- ▶ Develop program design
- ▶ Develop a network of 4-5 Magisterial District Judges (MDJs) in those areas willing to participate in the program over two years
- ▶ Hire staff to implement the program
- ▶ Develop and implement outreach strategy to tenants in need of eviction defense services (Month 1 and ongoing)
- ▶ Connect clients to other LVRHAB-member service providers to gain access to Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) and other rental assistance and Rapid Rehousing funds

# Eviction Defense in Magisterial District Court Landlord Tenant Cases

- 
- DEVELOPING A “LAWYER FOR A DAY” PROGRAM
  - LIMITED SCOPE REPRESENTATION
  - PILOT RIGHT TO COUNSEL



# EVICTION NUMBERS

## Lehigh County



County	Year filed			PA Covid Moratorium – March- Sept 4th , CDC Sept 4th	CDC Moratorium to August 2021	No Moratorium – ERAP assistance	Current Percentage Change from Historical Average
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022 (10 months)	
Lehigh	6,224	6,320	6,353	3669	4685	5718	Up 21%

This Data is from the [LSC Eviction Tracker](#) and AOPC data. (Daniel Bernstein, Madeline Youngren, Sarah Abdelhadi, Ranya Ahmed. Civil Court Data Initiative. Legal Services Corporation, 2021).

# NPLS representation at one MDJ in Allentown– August 2022 –November 2022

---

Scheduled	Appeared	Declined	Failed to Appear	Not Eligible	Represented
328	171	57	159	5	119

- 52% Tenants failed to appear – improved to 42.7% in October and November

# Access to Counsel – NPLS representation at one MDJ in Allentown– August 2022 – November 2022 -

---

Continued	Dismissed	Withdrawn	Cross Complaint	Judgment for Tenant	Total
39	10	6	1	9	59
Continued	Dismissed	Withdrawn	Cross Complaint	Judgment for Tenant	Total

Many of the cases continued gave tenants and landlords an opportunity to apply for rental assistance, negotiate a resolution, but no formal mediation process is in place

# Access to Counsel Landlord Judgments- August 2022 -November

---

Possession for LL/full damages	Possession for LL/reduced damages	Judgment for LL/no Possession	Judgment Paid/satisfied in court	Pay and Stay Judgment	3 Day Decision	Total
6	5	5	5	35	4	60

There are two types of judgments – Possession Granted, or Possession Granted unless Money Judgment Satisfied (Pay and Stay)- 5 tenants were able to pay in court, and others with pay and stay directed and assisted with payment plans or rental assistance